
Office of Environmental Justice (OEJ)



Environmental Justice Fact Sheet

ENVIRONMENTAL VIOLATIONS

What Are Environmental Violations? How would you react if you saw someone abandoning barrels in an empty field? Or pouring chemicals into a sewer drain? These may be examples of preventable environmental violations. This fact sheet will help you to understand what environmental violations are and what you can do to help combat them.

Examples Of Environmental Violations

- U Dumping of hazardous waste on public or private lands
- U Transporting hazardous waste to an undesignated waste site
- U Leaking or dumping of gas, oil, or waste products into water
- U The transportation of hazardous waste without the appropriate paperwork required for compliance with safety and environmental laws
- U Pouring hazardous waste down a sewer drain

U Filling in a wetland area without an issued permit from the Army Corps of Engineers

U Pesticide application in an area where workers are present or any application of a pesticide which is not intended as stated on the label

The EPA's Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance investigates violations of federal laws protecting human health and the environment.

Many environmental violations occur because dumping hazardous waste seems like an easy and an inexpensive way to dispose of it. However, the cost of cleaning up damaged ecosystems and restoring the environment to its normal state is extremely costly and difficult to do. The Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance (OECA) was created to investigate violations of

environmental laws and EPA regulations. Intentional environmental violations are punishable by criminal prosecution, fines and possible imprisonment. EPA works closely with other government agencies to ensure that our environment is safe and healthy for all people.

It is vital to protect the future of our environment, not just for ourselves, but for our children and for future generations

**- Carol Browner,
EPA Administrator**

The Role of Environmental Justice in Environmental Violations

All Americans deserve clean air, pure water, land that is safe to live on, and food that is safe to eat. Although EPA has made significant progress, some communities, such as minority and low-income, continue to bear a disproportionate burden of pollution. Much remains to be done to achieve environmental protection for every American. Environmental justice will continue to require creativity, innovation and development of stronger partnerships with those affected by environmental decisions.

OECA has made it a priority of using targeting approaches to ensure compliance with environmental regulations and environmental justice standards.

If you witness the dumping of hazardous substances, or any other environmental violation,

you should immediately contact your local police in order to catch the violator in the act. They will be able to help you, or refer you to the proper response unit that can. These units include:

Hazardous Material Disposal Unit

- Ambulance or Fire Department
- Local or state EPA
- Department of Health
- Department of Natural Resources
- Local Sewer District
- Department of Wildlife

Management

- EPA Headquarters

(in Washington, DC 202/564-2490)

What is Environmental Enforcement?

Environmental enforcement is a comprehensive program involving federal, state, local and tribal governments working together to enforce federal environmental laws. These laws set standards for what individuals and institutions must do to control or prevent pollution.

The term “enforcement” covers all efforts to require compliance with environmental laws. “Compliance” refers to the condition that exists when a person or company fully obeys the law. Environmental laws without compliance mean pollution problems continue and grow worse. EPA has a distinct enforcement program to make sure that environmental legislation gets the results that Congress and the public wants. This program includes

environmental justice concerns in all compliance efforts.

The fundamental aim of EPA's enforcement actions is to convince those who are regulated by environmental laws that it is better to comply quickly than to wait until they get caught. These actions can include civil and criminal prosecution in courts, administrative orders, and other forms of reprisal that take place after a violation has occurred. Although directed at a specific violator, enforcement causes a deterrent effect that motivates other people to comply.

Commonly asked Questions about Criminal Enforcement

What is an environmental crime?

An environmental crime involves the knowing or negligent pollution of our nation's land, water, or air in violation of federal laws designated to protect human health and the environment. Congress has determined that people who knowingly break our nation's environmental laws should be punished criminally.

What's the importance of criminal enforcement?

Criminal enforcement of environmental laws encourages compliance and deters polluters through the prospect of imprisonment and fines for those who would violate the nation's laws. The Office of Criminal Enforcement, Forensics, and Training (OCEFT) serves a

crucial role in demonstrating to Congress, the regulated community, and the public, that EPA is committed to taking strong measures to address the most strenuous environmental violations and to protect human health and the environment.

What does the EPA Office of Criminal Enforcement, Forensics, and Training do?

The primary job of the OCEFT is to investigate environmental crimes and apprehend those who are criminally responsible for violating environmental laws and refer them for prosecution. It also provides laboratory and evidentiary support for civil and criminal investigations, and offers enforcement training to state, local, federal and tribal enforcement offices.

What happens to people who are convicted of environmental crimes?

People convicted of committing environmental crimes may be either fined, sentenced to jail, or both.

If I see someone commit an environmental crime, what should I do?

Call your local Environmental Protection Agency regional office or your local police department and report to them what you witnessed.

**To Report a Possible Violation,
Call the Nearest Regional Office**

EPA REGIONAL ENFORCEMENT OFFICES

Boston Area Office

EPA Region 1
(CT, ME, MA-NH, RI, VT)
1 Congress Street, CID-B159
Boston, MA 02203
Ph: 617-565-3636

New York Area Office

~~EPA Region 2~~
(NY, NJ, PR, VI)
290 Broadway
New York, NY 10007-1866
Ph: 908-321-6754

Philadelphia Area Office

EPA Region 3
(DE, DC, MD, PA-VA-WV)
841 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19107
Ph: 215-587-0122

Atlanta Area Office

EPA Region 4
(AL, FL, GA, KY, MS, NC, SC, TN)
100 Alabama St. SW
Atlanta, GA 30303
Ph: 404-347-4885

Chicago Area Office

EPA Region 5
(IL, IN, MI, MN, OH, WI)
77 West Jackson N-4D
Chicago, IL 60604
Ph: 312-886-9872

Dallas Area Office

EPA Region 6
(AR, LA, NM, OK, TX)
First Interstate Bank Bldg.
1445 Ross Avenue
Dallas, TX 75202-2733
Ph: 214-665-6600

Kansas City Area Office

EPA Region 7
(MO-KS-NE-IA)
726 Minnesota Avenue
Kansas City, KS 66101
Ph: 913-551-7060

Denver Area Office

EPA Region 8
(CO-MT-ND-SD-UT-WY)
999 18th St, Suite 500
Denver, CO 80202
Ph: 303-312-6134

San Francisco Area Office

EPA Region 9
(AZ-CA-HI-NV-GU-AS)
75 Hawthorne Street, C-1
San Francisco, CA 94105
Ph: 415-744-2485

Seattle Area Office

EPA Region 10
(AK-ID-OR-WA)
1200 6th Avenue (SO-074)
Seattle, WA 98101
Ph: 206-553-8306